

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 21, 2002 (BOS Mtg. 4/2/02)

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: James O. McReynolds, County Administrator

SUBJECT: Virginia Transportation Development Plan

Each year the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) gives localities the opportunity to state their priorities with respect to road construction projects in the Interstate, Primary, and Urban systems at a series of public hearings conducted throughout Virginia. The Commonwealth Transportation Board and VDOT use the input provided by localities to formulate the annual Virginia Transportation Development Plan. The Board of Supervisors has traditionally provided its position through the adoption of a resolution that is presented at the CTB public hearing for the Hampton Roads District.

Over the next several weeks, the Commonwealth Transportation Board will be conducting a series of public hearings to receive input concerning development of the 2003 Six-Year Virginia Transportation Development Plan. The Hampton Roads District public hearing is set for April 12, 2002, at 9:30 am in Suffolk. Consistent with past practice, I recommend that one or two Board members plan to attend that hearing to present the County's requests for consideration.

As the Board is aware, the previous Virginia Transportation Development Plan (VTDP) has come under intense scrutiny as a result of the revenue estimates and project cost projections that it contained. As a result, earlier this year the Governor directed that the VTDP be re-evaluated to ensure that it contains realistic revenue, cost, and project schedule estimates. Interim Transportation Commissioner Ray Pethtel is managing this effort and issued the attached summary of the process guidance that VDOT intends to use to develop a new VTDP proposal for consideration by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. As the Board has heard, significant reductions in funding for transportation projects are being discussed. For example, tentative figures have been released indicating that there could be a 43 percent reduction statewide in funds available for Secondary System improvements over the next six years. While the CTB has some flexibility to make shifts among fund categories (i.e., to shift from Primary to mitigate cuts in Secondary), the "size of the [funding] pie won't get larger regardless of how it is sliced." Therefore, I believe it is safe to expect that the next VTDP will be disappointing to many localities, including York County, interested in seeing much-needed transportation improvements funded and scheduled.

With this as background, I recommend that the Board adopt a position statement this year that addresses not only the Interstate and Primary System projects mentioned in previous years, but also the other locally important transportation improvement components that should not be neglected in the revised VTDP. In that regard, staff offers the following for the Board's consideration:

Considerations

1. The County's Six-Year Secondary System Improvements Plan has been funded at approximately \$2.2 million annually and, over the course of the six year period extending to FY 2008, was previously anticipated to provide approximately \$14.6 million for improvements and various maintenance needs. Under the tentative projections released recently by VDOT, the Secondary System funding on a statewide basis would be reduced by 43 percent (and Urban System funding, primarily for cities, would be reduced by 47 percent). Specifically for York County, Secondary System funding would be reduced by 42 percent, or \$6.1 million over the next six years. Reductions of this magnitude will seriously impact the priority list and tentative schedule that the Board and VDOT have developed for Secondary System improvements in the County and significant adjustments will be necessary. While I don't believe that the County or other jurisdictions can expect to avoid reductions altogether, I believe it would be appropriate and important to urge VDOT and the CTB to lessen the magnitude of the reductions so that much-needed improvement projects – particularly in suburban localities such as York – can proceed with minimal slip-pages in schedules.
2. The Interim Commissioner's message concerning the VTDP process indicates that a commitment will be made to maintenance and I believe that objective should be applauded. At the same time, I believe that the CTB and VDOT should be urged to ensure that adequate funding is provided and maintained for a continuation of one of the most visible and important aspects of the maintenance program – the annual secondary system paving schedule. I know the Board is keenly interested in seeing this program funded at or near previous amounts so that the County's street network can be maintained in good condition. I believe it would be short-sighted of VDOT to under-fund this program since doing so could put streets in jeopardy of needing more substantial and costly repairs. I suggest that a statement reflecting the Board's desires concerning this program be included in the position transmitted to VDOT.
3. The Interstate / Primary project listing adopted by the Board last year included the following projects:
 - ?? Interstate 64 widening – Jefferson Avenue (south) to Route 199
 - ?? Route 17 widening – Route 171 to Route 173
 - ?? Route 105 widening – Jefferson Avenue to Route 17
 - ?? Route 105 extension – Route 17 to Route 173
 - ?? Route 238 / Baptist Road intersection improvements
 - ?? Route 171 widening – Route 17 to Poquoson

The current status of each of these projects is summarized on Attachment 2. Based on the sorting process outlined on page 2 of the Interim Commissioner's letter, staff believes these projects (and those contained in the 2001 VTDP) would be categorized / ranked as follows:

Priority 1 – *Projects under construction or completed but not fully funded*

Priority 2 – *Projects with right-of-way acquired and ready for advertisement*

?? Route 105 widening – Jefferson Ave to Route 17

Priority 3 – *Projects ready for right-of-way acquisition*

?? Route 105 extension – Route 17 to Route 173

?? Route 17 widening – Route 105 to Siege Lane

Priority 4 – *Projects at the field inspection stage*

?? I-64 widening – Jefferson Avenue to Route 199

?? Route 238 / Baptist Road intersection

Priority 5 – *Projects at the scoping stage*

?? Route 17 widening – Wolftrap Road to Ella Taylor Road

Notice that the Route 17 widening (except for the Wolftrap to Ella Taylor segment) and the Route 171 widening projects probably wouldn't even be categorized in the "scoping stage" since they have never appeared in the previously adopted Six-Year Plans. Clearly, categorizing and ranking projects in this manner would not reflect the priority that I understand the Board to have placed on improvement of the southern segments of Route 17.

Based on all indications, development of the new VTDP will require that a number of currently included projects be eliminated. While not wanting to concede that any York County's priorities will be eliminated, I think we must realistically be prepared for that to happen. In that regard, I believe that the Board should identify two or three projects that it considers to be critical and that those projects should be emphasized in the position statement transmitted to the CTB. Accordingly, my recommendations for a priority listing are:

Priority 1 – Route 105 extension between Route 17 and Route 173: This project is almost entirely funded through previous or pending allocations of Regional STP funds (federal pass-through funds) and it should not be as dependent as others on general transportation fund revenues. This project is critically important to the County's economic development objectives and I believe it should be ranked as the County's top priority and that the CTB should also rank it high, even though it is just at the right-of-way acquisition stage (third tier of the Commissioner's priority system).

Priority 2 – Route 17 widening between Wolftrap Road and Route 171:

The County has received a commitment from VDOT that approximately \$10 million will be transferred to the segment of Route 17 between Wolftrap Road and Ella Taylor Road and I believe the Board should insist that this commitment be honored, even though the project is only at the "scoping stage" (fifth tier in the Commissioner's priority system). In addition, an effort is underway to have the remainder of the project north of Route 105 cancelled and the remaining budgeted funds (approximately \$7 million) transferred to lower Route 17 to supplement the Wolftrap to Ella Taylor effort and hopefully extend the improvements to Route 134. I believe the Board

should emphasize the importance of this cancellation and transfer even though it too is in the scoping stage. Finally, and consistent with the position the County has taken since 1987, I believe the Board should request that additional funds be allocated to supplement the transferred funds and to allow the widening improvements to be extended further south, all the way to Route 171. Based on estimates previously prepared by VDOT, this would require approximately \$7 million more, making the total improvement project cost approximately \$24 million.

Priority 3 – Route 105 widening from Jefferson Avenue to Route 17:
Even though this project is ready to advertise (making it a second tier priority under the Commissioner's system), I believe that it is a lower priority than the above-noted projects. In that regard, difficult as the decision may be to suggest that a budgeted project be deferred, I believe that it should be if that is the only way the Route 105 extension and Route 17 widening projects can be funded in the new VTDP.

Absent from this proposed priority list are the I-64 widening project, the Route 171 widening project and the Route 238 / Baptist Road improvement project. Although each is important, particularly the Route 171 widening, I don't believe they are as critical as the three suggested priorities. In the interest of sending a clear and decisive message to VDOT and the CTB about the County's priorities, I do not think they should be included as a current priority. Instead, they are mentioned in proposed Resolution R02-78 as an area needing attention in the near future.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the significant budget issues facing VDOT, it is clear that there will be many disappointments associated with this year's Virginia Transportation Development Plan. I recommend that the Board adopt attached proposed Resolution R02-78 to express the above-described position with respect to project and funding priorities. Further, I recommend that the Chairman and another Board member plan to attend the April 12 public hearing in Suffolk to deliver remarks concerning the County's position.

Carter/3337:jmc

Attachment
Proposed Resolution R02-78